

**Case 3440*****Atrichornis* Stejneger, 1885 (Aves, ATRICHORNITHIDAE): proposed conservation**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this application, under Article 23.9.3 of the Code, is the conservation of the generic name *Atrichornis* Stejneger, 1885 for the Australian scrub-birds (ATRICHORNITHIDAE), which has been in universal use as a valid generic name for almost 90 years. It is threatened, through the incorrect subsequent spelling *Atrichia*, by the name *Atricha* Gould, 1844, which was used for the scrub-birds into the first decade or so of the 20th century, and thus cannot be replaced under Article 23.9.2 of the Code. It is proposed that the name *Atricha* Gould be suppressed to confer stability in nomenclature.

**Keywords.** Nomenclature; taxonomy; ATRICHORNITHIDAE; *Atrichornis*; *Atricha*; *Atrichia*; *Atrichornis rufescens*; scrub-birds; Australia.

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1. Australian scrub-birds are of global evolutionary significance as primitive songbirds (Ames, 1971; Bock & Clench, 1985; Sibley & Ahlquist, 1985, 1990) and have a high conservation profile in Australia. Their two extant species, the noisy scrub-bird (*Atrichornis clamosus* (Gould, 1844)) and rufous scrub-bird (*A. rufescens* (Ramsay, 1866)) are under diverse categories of threat and subject to governmental conservation action (Ovington, 1978; Garnett & Crowley, 2000). Since the early 20th century they have been known universally by the generic name *Atrichornis* Stejneger, 1885, type genus of the family ATRICHORNITHIDAE. The type species of *Atrichornis* Stejneger, 1885 is *Atrichia rufescens* Ramsay, 1866 (p. 2, col. 4) by monotypy. To date, *Atrichornis* has been, and continues to be, in use in hundreds of scientific papers and reports, as well as in all references quoted above, and in global checklists and nomenclators such as Wolters (1875–1982), Mayr (1979), Sibley & Monroe (1990), Dickinson (2003) and Gill & Wright (2006), atlases of Australian birds (Blakers et al., 1984; Barrett et al., 2003), global and Australian handbooks (Schodde & Tiedemann, 1986; Higgins et al., 2001; Danks, 2004), checklists and taxonomic manuals of Australasian birds (R.A.O.U. Checklist Committee, 1926; Schodde, 1975; Christidis & Boles, 1994; Schodde & Mason, 1999; Stanger et al., 1998; Clayton et al., 2006), and field guides (e.g., Pizzey & Knight, 1997; Simpson et al., 1999; Morecombe, 2003). Its stability and currency are therefore vitally important for communication in day-to-day avian biology and ecology.

2. During the 19th century, *Atrichia* Gould, [March] 1844 (Gould, 1844b, text to Plate 11) had been used as the generic name for the scrub-birds, a name superseded by *Atrichornis* Stejneger, 1885 when Gould's name was found to be a junior homonym of *Atrichia* Schrank, 1803 (Insecta) and invalid (Sharpe, 1901, p. 187). In their search for early publications of Gould names in newspapers, Bruce & McAllan (1990) have since unearthed an earlier spelling of *Atrichia* Gould: *Atricha*. It appeared in an advance report in the periodical *The Athenaeum*, of a meeting of the Zoological Society of London (Gould, 1844a, p. 90). Published there on 27 January 1844 with a brief diagnosis, and with Gould as author of the binomen *Atricha clamosa*, it is available under Articles 12.2.6 and 56.2 of the Code, and thus is senior to *Atrichia* Gould, [March] 1844 and now threatens *Atrichornis* Stejneger, 1885.

3. Two options suggest themselves for replacing the name *Atricha* Gould, [January] 1844. The first option assumes that *Atricha* Gould, [January] 1844 in *The Athenaeum* (Gould, 1844a) and *Atrichia* Gould, [March] 1844 in *The Birds of Australia*, part 14 (Gould, 1844b) are independent names that enter separately into synonymy and homonymy. In this event, *Atricha* may be replaced readily under Articles 23.9.1.1 and 23.9.1.2 of the Code, without recourse to the Commission, because it has not been used since 1899. The second option interprets *Atricha* and *Atrichia* as coming from one source and therefore as different spellings of the one name. In this case the consequence is that *Atricha*, in the incorrect subsequent spelling *Atrichia*, has been used for the Australian scrub-birds into the first decades of the 20th century, for example in Campbell (1901) and in five of six references in the journal *Emu* to 1910, and in four of 18 to 1920. In these circumstances, Article 23.9.1.1 of the Code cannot be applied, and a ruling by the Commission becomes necessary.

4. We have examined the links between Gould's available Australian bird names published in newspapers (listed in Bruce & McAllan, 1990), the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* and Gould's folio, *The birds of Australia*. It was Gould's practice, when preparing them for publication in his folio, to read the descriptions of his new species at meetings of the Zoological Society of London in advance. As a result, they were described not only in both the folio and *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, with priority going to the part of the folio or *Proceedings* that appeared first, but were also reported in newspaper notices of the meetings, often ahead of time (e.g. *Atricha*). In each of those sources, the same name (or a variant spelling) for the same species with the same author is referred by citation back to the original reading of the name at the Zoological Society, thereby connecting the sources to a single origin. This leads us to conclude that the names-in-common (and their variant spellings) for the one species in each of the sources should be treated as one and the same name, and that therefore, application to the Commission to suppress *Atricha* Gould is necessary. It is a conclusion that has already been reached implicitly in all previous checklists and nomenclators of Australian birds; otherwise their synonymies would be full of Gould names doubled-up separately from his folio and the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*. Moreover, it is a conclusion both explicit and implicit for *Atrichia* Gould itself in such basic works as Sharpe's *Catalogue of the birds in the British Museum* (1890, p. 659), Mathews's *The birds of Australia* (1920–1921, p. 30), and Neave's *Nomenclator Zoologicus* (1939, p. 351).

5. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:
- (1) to suppress the generic name *Atricha* Gould, [January] 1844 for the Purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for the Purposes of the Principle of Homonymy;
  - (2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the name *Atrichornis* Stejneger, 1885 (gender: masculine), type species by monotypy *Atrichia rufescens* Ramsay, 1866;
  - (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *rufescens* Ramsay, 1866, as published in the binomen *Atrichia rufescens* (specific name of the type species of *Atrichornis* Stejneger, 1885);
  - (4) place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology the name *Atricha* Gould, [January] 1844, as suppressed in (1) above.

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This application has been evaluated and approved by all responding members (10 of 12) of the SCON. It was originally submitted to the Commission on 19 April 2007 in a combined application with Case 3415.

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